

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

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1. (Original): A method, comprising:
operating a knowledge-base system configured to store a database containing answers to questions, the knowledge-base system being operatively coupled to a client computer;
receiving a message from the client computer;
determining the message from the client computer was a reply to a previously generated message from the knowledge-base system; and
forwarding the message from the client computer to a representative in response to said determining.
 2. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein the message from the client computer is an email.
 3. (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
enclosing a message identification number on all communications sent by the knowledge-base system; and
wherein said determining includes searching the message from the client computer for the message identification number.
 4. (Original): The method of claim 3, wherein said forwarding includes attaching message history information.
 5. (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
maintaining a communication log of communications sent and received with the knowledge-base system; and

wherein said determining includes ascertaining with the communication log whether a reply detection limit has been exceeded for the client computer.

a' 6. (Original): The method of claim 5, wherein the reply detection limit includes a communication interval limit of time intervals between successive communications with the client computer and a number of communications limits based on a number of communications with the client computer.

7. (Original): The method of claim 5, wherein the communications maintained in the communication log include email communications, web chatting communications, telephone conversations, and personal conversations.

8. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein the knowledge-base system and the client computer are operatively coupled over a network.

9. (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
enclosing a message identification number on all communications sent by the knowledge-base system;

maintaining a communication log of communications sent and received with the knowledge-base system; and

wherein said determining includes searching the message from the client computer for the message identification number and ascertaining with the communication log whether a reply detection limit has been exceeded for the client computer.

10. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein the representative is a human being.

11. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein the representative is an automated system.

Claims 12-16 (Canceled).

a' 17. (Original): A method, comprising:
operating a system configured with a database including a plurality of question-answer sets;
receiving a query input to the system, the query input including a word;
selecting one or more of the question-answer sets with the system in response to the query input by evaluating presence of the word in one or more answers of the question-answer sets differently than presence of the word in one or more questions of the question-answer sets; and
providing an output from the system based on said selecting.

18. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said evaluating includes weighting the answers more than the questions.

19. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said evaluating includes weighting the answers less than the questions.

20. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising generating one or more word indices, said selecting including referencing the word indices.

21. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said selecting includes scoring a length of one of the questions in proportion to a length of the query input.

22. (Original): The method of claim 17, wherein said selecting includes scoring the question-answer sets to create a distribution of scores and determining the query result based upon variability of the scores.

23. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising designating one or more words to ignore.

24. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising alerting a representative when a particular one of the question-answer sets is included in the output.

25. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising:
designating corresponding weights for the word in the questions and the answers; and
wherein said selecting includes scoring each of the questions and the answers using the corresponding weights.

26. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising defining aliases for at least one word.

27. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising designating one of the question-answer sets to always appear in the output for the query input.

28. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising designating one of the question-answer sets to never appear in the output for the query input.

29. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising proportionally weighting one of the question-answer sets to reduce likelihood of appearing in the output for the query input.

30. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising proportionally weighting one of the question-answer sets to increase likelihood of appearing in the output for the query input.

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31. (Original): The method of claim 17, further adding a question-answer set to the database by email.

32. (Original): The method of claim 17, further comprising:
receiving a message from a client computer coupled to the system;
determining the message from the client computer was a reply to a previously generated message from the system; and
forwarding the message from the client computer to a representative in response to said determining.

33. (Original): The method of claim 32, further comprising:
creating a response message based on the message from the client computer, at least one of a number of response templates and the selected one or more sets, the system being configured to store the response templates each providing a different response format; and
wherein said providing the output includes sending the response message to the client computer.

34. (Original): A method, comprising:
operating a knowledge-base system configured to store a database formatted with a number of question-answer sets, the knowledge-base system being operatively coupled to a client computer;
receiving an input corresponding to a question from the client computer;
scoring the question-answer sets with respect to the question;

determining a threshold limit based upon said scoring; and
selecting the question-answer sets with scores above the threshold limit.

35. (Original): The method of claim 34, wherein said determining includes:
calculating variability of scores from said scoring; and
basing the threshold limit on the variability of the scores.

36. (Original): The method of claim 34, further comprising:
defining an absolute threshold limit that is universally applicable to all
received questions; and
selecting the question-answer sets with scores above the absolute threshold
limit.

37. (Original): The method of claim 34, further comprising:
creating a reflexive index that includes the question from the client computer
and at least the selected question-answer sets from said selecting;
scoring each question from the selected question-answer sets against the
reflexive index;
scoring the question from the client against the reflexive index to generate a
question score; and
choosing the selected question-answer sets with scores that favorably correlate
with the question score.

38. (Original): The method of claim 37, wherein the reflexive index further
includes all of the question-answer sets.

39. (Original): A method, comprising:

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operating a knowledge-base system configured to store a database formatted with a number of question-answer sets, the knowledge-base system being operatively coupled to a client computer;

receiving an input corresponding to a question from the client computer;

selecting one or more candidate sets from the question-answer sets based on the question from the client computer;

creating a reflexive index that includes the question from the client computer and at least the candidate sets;

scoring each question from the candidate sets against the reflexive index;

scoring the question from the client against the reflexive index to generate a question score; and

choosing the candidate sets with scores that correlate with the question score.

40. (Original): The method of claim 39, wherein the reflexive index further includes all of the question-answer sets.

41. (Original): A system comprising:

means for determining a message from a client computer was a reply to a previously generated message from a FAQ database and forwarding the message to a representative in response;

means for evaluating question components and answer components of the FAQ database independently relative to an input query; and

means for providing a response to the FAQ database query in accordance with one or more response templates, the response templates each relating to a different response format.

42. (Original): The system of claim 41, further comprising means for selectively hiding or ignoring words included in one or more question-answer entries of the FAQ database.

43. (Original): The system of claim 41, further comprising means for providing an alias designation.

44. (Original): A system for processing a question from a client computer, comprising:

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a database formatted with a number of question-answer sets, said sets each including a question field and a corresponding answer field, each of said question and answer fields being configured to contain one or more words, said database further including a question index that associates each of said words in said question fields with each of said question-answer sets and an answer index that associates said words in said answer fields with each of said question-answer sets;

a matcher operatively coupled to said database to produce a query result using both said question index and said answer index in response to the question from the client computer; and

a processor operatively coupled to said matcher to send said query result to the client computer.

45. (New): The method of claim 1, further comprising:

wherein the previously generated message includes an answer to a question from the client computer;

sending the answer from the knowledge-base system to the client computer before said receiving the message from the client computer.